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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001357

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IIP TELLS AMBASSADOR "THIS WAS NOT THE DEMOCRACY
WE'D HOPED FOR"

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a three-hour meeting with the Ambassador, VP Hashimi and a number of high ranking IIP officials expressed frustration over Tawafuq's lack of meaningful participation in the GOI. As a result, Hashimi noted, the bloc was considering withdrawal from the government. Hashimi said he did not feel that the USG dealt with the IIP as a full partner. He lamented US detention policies and perceived lack of serious consideration for his recommendations on how to improve them; he expressed frustration at having been sidelined from GOI Anbar policy and at signs of USG support for Abdalsittar Abu Risha, a tribal sheikh in Anbar with a "lengthy criminal record". On constitutional review, Hashimi argued that one month (the committee's deadline for submitting recommendations) was insufficient to tackle the "fundamental areas of disagreement" that remained. If the review was not comprehensive, Hashimi said, the IIP could not lend support to a second referendum on the constitution. On De-Baathification, Hashimi said that although PM Maliki announced a compromise draft law with President Talabani, they had yet to present it to the CoR or lend it any real political support. Hashimi also complained that the GOI was not using its Sunni representatives such as himself and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Rafaa Essawi to act as a liaison with Iraq's Sunni Arab neighbors. Instead, the VP was relegated to learning about GOI regional foreign policy via the media. The Ambassador emphasized USG support for the IIP and expressed the USG's willingness to work together to address the issues Hashimi raised. The Ambassador stressed that the only way to achieve results was through enhanced Tawafuq engagement, not withdrawal. End Summary.

DETAINEES

¶2. (C) The VP said he had offered many suggestions during his December 2006 trip to Washington on how the US could defuse the insurgency, and addressing the detainee issue was at the top of the list. Hashimi said that the USG's policy on detention in Iraq was dealing a "strategic blow" to its mission. Keeping AQI and insurgent detainees in the same cell area had allowed AQI fertile recruitment ground. Hashimi said his suggestion about separating AQI from insurgent detainees had been ignored, and that he had been disappointed to hear that instead of pursuing mass detainee release as he has been advocating, the US intended to increase the size of the detainee population in its custody as part of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP).

¶3. (C) Innocent, elderly, handicapped and young detainees must be released immediately, Hashimi said. Furthermore, those identified as AQI should be separate from the rest of the detainee population, and there should be an education campaign among more moderate inmates, where imams could preach tolerance. Finally, Hashimi argued, newly released

inmates should be rehabilitated, given vocational training and social guidance. He proclaimed himself a willing partner in these efforts, noting that a high profile detainee release would be a major political boost for him.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ANBAR ENGAGEMENT?

¶4. (C) Hashimi told the Ambassador that Secretary Rice had personally asked him to focus on Anbar; this was why he sponsored the October 2006 Anbar Tribes conference that brought together representatives from various Anbar tribes, Prime Minister Maliki, and several other GOI notables to discuss the needs of the province. The IIP has lost at least 130 members in Anbar, the VP said, and had begun fighting AQI "long before" the Salvation Council. He said he found Sheikh Abdalsittar Abu Risha's ascendance "shocking" given his criminal record and clear material interest in fighting AQI.

¶5. (C) The Anbar Provincial Council Chair Dr. Abdalsalaam Abdallah was also present, and he gave the Ambassador a synopsis of the current situation in Anbar, the tension caused by the tribal sheikhs' bid for increased power. Abdallah said the PC was preparing to relocate to Ramadi, and had already set aside and furnished office space. (Note: Also present at the meeting was IIP's Dr. Rafaa Essawi who has been the PM's right hand on Anbar and is the mediator for the Anbar Coordination Committee, a mechanism that has been key to resolving disputes between the tribes and local government. Essawi, an Anbar native, was chosen by the PM because he is well respected in Anbar has a good working relationship with the PM, was in the uncomfortable position of remaining silent as his party leader complained about

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being sidelined from GOI Anbar outreach. End note.) Hashimi said he planned to visit the Anbar region "in the coming days" but preferred not to travel unless he had something to deliver there.

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW MUST BE MEANINGFUL

¶6. (C) VP Hashimi told the Ambassador that the IIP had paid in blood - and popularity - for its last minute decision to accept the Constitution. Hashimi said the US promised in return a thorough review; if the review process was not meaningful it would have "disastrous consequences." Deputy Constitutional Review Committee Chair Ayad Sammaraie told the Ambassador that the process was moving forward and everyone was comfortable with the coordination role played by the UN. However, the committee had yet to tackle the issues where there was "fundamental disagreement" such as the prerogatives of regional versus federal government, the uniformity of Iraqi personal status laws which regulate issues such as divorce and marriage, the judicial system and resource distribution. Hashimi interjected by observing that one month was not enough time to address these issues, and warned that the IIP could not lend support to a referendum on the constitution unless all the contention issues were reviewed.

COMPROMISE DE-BAATH LAW NEEDS BROAD SUPPORT

¶7. (C) Hashimi remarked his surprise at the announcement of a compromise De-Baath law put forth by the PM and President, as he had been under the impression that the draft would come from the Presidency Council. He noted that since their announcement to the media, the PM and President had yet to formally present the bill to the CoR. Moreover, it appeared that neither leader had worked to obtain the agreement of their constituencies but had instead adopted the bill as "individuals" - which did not bode well for the law's passage

at the CoR. Hashimi said that the PM presented the bill to the De-Baathification Commission for debate and discussion, where it was heavily criticized. The VP suggested that the heads of all political blocs meet to discuss the law and then, once true consensus was reached, the Presidency Council should submit a final draft to the legislature.

NOT THE DEMOCRACY WE'D HOPED FOR

18. (C) Hashimi said that the Sunnis were routinely sidelined from security decisions - while the IIP had participated in good faith at the start of the BSP by offering intelligence information, they were not consulted in any aspect of its implementation. Further, their demand that MoD Abdalkader be replaced has met with no response from the PM. PM Maliki never briefs VP Hashimi and others on the substance of his conversations with President Bush, and VP Hashimi was not involved at all in planning for the Arab Neighbors Conference. He questioned why the GOI was not calling on its Sunni partners to act as Iraq's emissaries in the region. Neither Hashimi nor Minister of State Rafaa Essawi were invited to participate in Neighbors Conference planning. Instead, as Hashimi learned from the media, Tawafuq Minister of Education Al-Ajili was selected to attend - although no Tawafuq leader was consulted on this choice. Hashimi said that Tawafuq's frustration was mounting because of the lack of cooperation and consultation. There were other democracies where parties with real difference were able to share power effectively, Hashimi said, but this had not been realized in Iraq. Tawafuq was beginning to lose hope, and was considering the possibility of withdrawal.

ENGAGEMENT NEEDED, NOT WITHDRAWAL

19. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that the US was a firm supporter of the IIP and viewed the party as a full, legitimate partner in the democratic process. Further, he added, Tawafuq's presence was an essential element to Iraq's democracy. While there were many problems to be addressed, withdrawal from the government was not the answer. Giving up at this phase would not advance Tawafuq's goals, it would only hinder them. The Ambassador told the VP that the USG was committed to working in partnership to address Tawafuq's concerns, and would look to Tawafuq to remain engaged and to the IIP to maintain its positive role.
CROCKER